



Rep. Shirley Hankins



Rep. Jerome Delvin

8th Legislative District

1997 Session Report

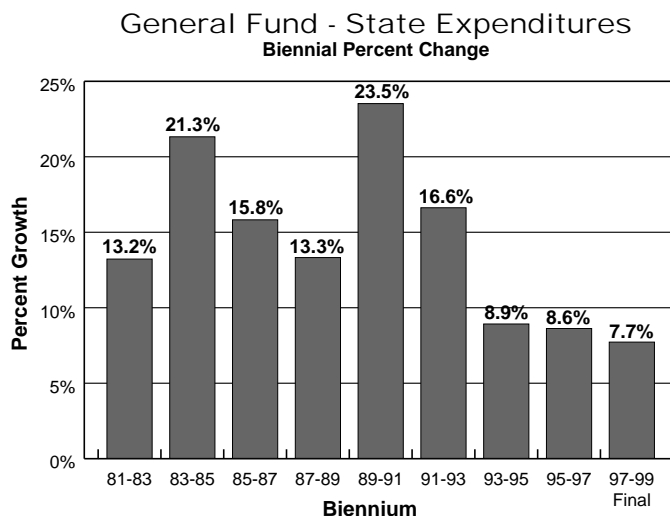
Dear neighbors,

The most efficient session in 40 years

The 1997 legislative session ended on a historic note. For the first time in 40 years, we completed our work on time. That hasn't happened in a budget-writing year since 1957. Special sessions have been the rule rather than the exception. This year, for the first time in several generations, taxpayers will not pay the extra staffing and workload costs of a special session.

Spending less, saving more

Our budget for 1997-99 is \$19.07 billion. **This is the smallest state budget increase — 7.7 percent — since 1971.** The final budget is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit. In the three years since Republicans gained a majority in the state House of Representatives, we have consistently held spending down. And by staying below the 601 lid, we reduce spending that much *more* over time — a considerable savings for taxpayers.



YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Transportation

The following local maintenance projects have received funding in the 1997-99 transportation budget:

- **Finley Road to Perkins Road** (\$115,000)
- **George Washington Way** (\$471,750)
- **Edison Street** (\$148,461)
- **Stevens Drive** (\$320,000)
- **Stevens Drive to SR 182** (\$498,309)
- **Airport Road to Duportail Road** (\$486,530)
- **Ambassador Drive to Red Mt. Road** (\$549,000)

Capital budget

The following local improvement projects have received funding in the 1997-99 capital budget:

- **WSU/Tri-Cities branch campus** — *Preliminary work for new science center* (\$140,000)
- **Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology** (\$380,000)
- **Kennewick Youth Skate Park** (\$50,000)
- **Highlands Grange Park** (\$5,000)
- **Columbia Point/Richland amphitheater** (\$3 million)

Representatives Shirley Hankins and Jerome Delvin

Education

We promised to properly fund education, and we have kept our word. Our budget increases education funding by 7.5 percent over the biennium — an increase that stays ahead of enrollment and exceeds the inflation rate (about 2.5 percent). We increased funding in the following specific areas:

THE BUDGET — PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total public school spending

'95-'97 \$8.28 billion

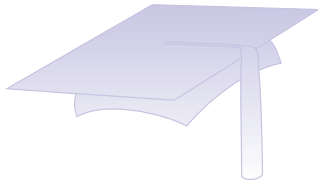
'97-'99 \$8.90 billion

Annual per-pupil spending

'97 \$4,561 per student

'98 \$4,635 per student

'99 \$4,729 per student



Specific increases

Teacher salary increase

(3 percent on 7-1-97) — \$297 million

School construction — \$75 million

Technology grants — \$39 million

Instructional materials — \$20 million

(average: \$458 per classroom)

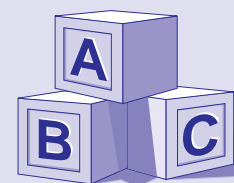
We also established clear priorities in K-12 education, with an emphasis on academics, discipline and choice. We sharpened the focus on reading in the primary grades with greater teacher training and better assessments to identify students who need early assistance. We gave teachers and school districts more latitude and authority to address discipline and gang problems.

Precious resources — Delvin works for families

This year, the tragic case of a local woman led Rep. Jerome Delvin to offer his proposal for changing the way DSHS deals with parents of disabled children so that the families would be treated more humanely.

Currently, some parents are forced by difficult circumstances to give up custody of children with developmental disabilities in order to obtain services for the child. Delvin's proposal was inspired by a case involving the mother of a disabled child who wanted to be able to work to support herself and her youngster. After exhausting all of the help her own family could offer, the mother went to DSHS seeking assistance. The child was taken away from the mother by the agency, and later died.

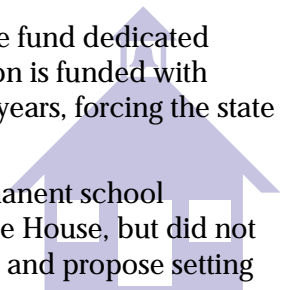
Delvin's proposal creates a new voluntary placement process so that parents of disabled children can have their child placed in out-of-home care to receive services without giving up custody. His bill was included in the final version of a broader bill, SB 5710, which passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the governor.



School construction — Hankins plans for the future

This year, Rep. Hankins sponsored legislation that would create a permanent state fund dedicated exclusively to school construction. Currently, the state's school construction obligation is funded with revenues from timber sales, but these revenues have fallen short of needs for several years, forcing the state to compensate with bond sales or additional cash appropriations.

Rep. Hankins' plan would use a portion of state lottery money to establish a permanent school construction account that would meet revenue needs in the future. Her bill passed the House, but did not receive support in the Senate. She intends to reintroduce this legislation next session, and propose setting aside \$162 million in lottery revenues for school construction.



Tomorrow's education at today's prices

We know that young people with college degrees have a better chance to find family-wage jobs. But working parents are understandably concerned about the rising costs of higher education. This year, we've instituted a program that allows parents to purchase future college credits at current tuition rates.

Parents could purchase up to four full years of college credit as their child matures, and then apply them toward tuition at any of our state colleges. The credits purchased would not shrink over time. What you pay for today is what you would receive tomorrow. This an excellent way to provide broad access to education for our young people. The program is still being developed, but it should be up and running before the end of this year.

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Juvenile justice

We have completely reformed the way that we protect our neighborhoods from young criminals. Our juvenile justice bill, which passed unanimously, enacts the most significant changes in 20 years. This is a major achievement, and a true victory for our citizens.

Here are the highlights:

Accountability — 16- and 17-year-olds will be prosecuted as adults in the following cases: drive-by shootings, first-degree robbery, first-degree child rape, first-degree burglary with a previous conviction, and any crime in which the offender was armed with a firearm. These crimes are added to a list of offenses that already includes murder and rape.

New sentencing system — The bill replaces the current sentencing "point system" with sentencing ranges based on two factors: 1) seriousness of the current offense; and 2) number of prior felony and misdemeanor sentences.

Sentencing alternatives — The measure includes several alternatives to jail or prison time, including boot camps, home detention, community service, and mandatory school attendance.

Deferred convictions would be replaced with deferred dispositions. Juveniles who agree to this form of probation after a guilty plea or a guilty verdict may substitute community supervision for incarceration. Juveniles must comply with all conditions of the deferral or face court-imposed jail time. Certain juveniles also could receive suspended sentences if they agree to undergo alcohol and drug dependency treatment, and comply with conditions of community supervision.

Parental involvement — Parents of juvenile offenders would be required to participate in court proceedings involving their children.

Opening juvenile criminal records — The standards for sealing juvenile criminal records would be raised. Various offenses would no longer be sealed; subsequent good or bad behavior by the offender would be a determining factor.

Community Juvenile Accountability Act — Grants would be made available to local governments to fund community-based juvenile accountability and intervention programs that meet specified criteria. Juveniles with three or more convictions would be referred to community-based intervention programs.

Housing of juveniles sentenced in adult court — Juvenile offenders under age 18 who are incarcerated in the adult system would be placed in housing units or jail cells separate from adult inmates.

Educating juveniles sentenced to adult prison — Juvenile offenders would be provided with opportunities to achieve either a high school diploma or GED.

Welfare reform

This year saw the culmination of a four-year struggle to reform welfare. The Legislature passed and the governor signed a bill that replaces our broken welfare system with provisions that emphasize personal responsibility and work. Welfare recipients will abide by the following conditions:

- Time limits on benefits (five years)
- Requirements to work, search for work or perform community service
- Child care assistance for working parents
- Job training
- Teen parents must live at home or in an approved establishment and progress toward a diploma or GED to receive benefits

We have fully funded this program, which we call the Personal Responsibility Act of 1997. Coupled with changes to the federal welfare system, we believe we will help families to free themselves from the cycle of dependency.

Tax relief — Property taxes

This year, the Legislature approved \$414 million worth of tax cuts. One of our first actions of the session was a vote to prevent an immediate property tax increase in January. We extended a 4.7 percent reduction in the state property tax levy through 1997.

Several other property tax relief measures were passed by the Legislature, but were vetoed by the governor. In response, we have placed our proposals on the referendum ballot this fall. The voters will make the final decision on whether to approve \$220 million worth of property tax relief.

Our proposal would make the 4.7 percent state levy reduction permanent. It would limit the property tax “spikes” that result from unexpected assessment increases. Also, it would limit property tax increases at the local level. Currently, local governments are allowed to increase property taxes by a maximum of 6 percent each year. Our proposal would limit increases to 6 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower (inflation has been running at about 2.5 percent).

Small business tax relief

This year, we voted to complete the rollback of a heavy tax increase on small businesses imposed in 1993, during the Lowry administration. The first half of the rollback was passed in 1996 and vetoed by then-Gov. Lowry. The Legislature overrode the veto. We voted for the second half of the rollback this year. The repeal takes effect in July 1998.

Other tax relief

Integrity and a good reputation shouldn't be taxed, but some county assessors are eager to tax these “intangibles” because they see a new source of revenue. This is a distasteful attempt to squeeze yet more revenue out of hard-working small business owners and their families. Moreover the identification and valuation of intangible personal property presents a host of bureaucratic headaches; who decides how much a reputation is worth?

We prevented this trend with a bill that clearly exempts intangible personal property from taxation. The governor has signed the bill.